

SPECIAL FEATURE (3 OF 12)
MATTHEW SCHNEIDER/LOS ANGELES

FEBRUARY 1, 1978

ACADEMY SPECIAL #3 -- THE ACTOR: JACK LEMMON
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS AND INTERVIEW IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: THIS APRIL OF 1978, THE AMERICAN FILM INDUSTRY IS MARKING THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE "OSCAR" -- THE GOLDEN STATUETTE AWARDED EACH YEAR FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT IN THE VARIOUS ARTS AND CRAFTS OF FILM MAKING. IN COOPERATION WITH THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURES ARTS AND SCIENCES, VOA IS PRESENTING A SERIES OF SPECIAL INTERVIEWS WITH PROMINENT HOLLYWOOD FILMMAKERS -- ALL ACADEMY AWARD WINNERS. TODAY'S REPORT, "THE ACTOR".

TAPE: CUT ONE -- LEMMON

"IDEALLY, THE ROLE OF THE ACTOR IN MAKING A FILM IS EXACTLY AS IT WOULD BE ON STAGE OR ANY OTHER MEDIUM, AND THAT IS BASICALLY, AT EVERY MOMENT THAT HE IS ON, TO BE CARRYING OUT THE AUTHOR'S ORIGINAL INTENT. THAT'S IDEALLY. I DON'T THINK THAT ALWAYS HAPPENS. AND EVERYTIME THAT YOU'RE ON STAGE OR CAMERA, BASICALLY YOU SHOULD BE THINKING NOT, 'WHAT CAN I DO?' BUT, 'WHAT SHOULD I DO?' I THINK IN ANY ART FORM, WHETHER IT'S CREATIVE OR INTERPRETATIVE, BASICALLY ACTING IS PRIMARILY INTERPRETIVE. IF YOU'RE GOOD IT CAN BE CREATIVE, AND THAT IS; SIMPLE, SIMPLE, SIMPLE. ANYTHING REALLY OUTSTANDING IS REALLY SIMPLE, IN ALL ART. IT REALLY IS."

NARR: AFTER NEARLY TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AND THIRTY-TWO FILMS, JACK LEMMON IS RECOGNIZED AS ONE OF HOLLYWOOD'S MOST INVENTIVE ACTORS. MR. LEMMON IS MOST WIDELY KNOWN FOR THE ROLES HE HAS PLAYED IN COMEDIES SUCH AS "THE OUT-OF-TOWNERS" AND NEIL SIMONS' "THE ODD COUPLE" AND "PRISONER OF SECOND AVENUE." MR. LEMMON'S FIRST ACADEMY AWARD, AS BEST SUPPORTING ACTOR, CAME AS A RESULT OF HIS ROLE IN "MR. ROBERTS."

BUT TWO OF JACK LEMMON'S FIVE ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS HAVE BEEN FOR PARTS IN SERIOUS DRAMA; "DAYS OF WINE AND ROSES," WHICH DEALT WITH THE RAVAGES OF ALCOHOLISM, AND "SAVE THE

NARR: TIGER," WHICH EXPLORED THE LIFE OF A DISILLUSIONED BUSINESS
(CONT'D) EXECUTIVE, AND GAVE THE BOSTON BORN ACTOR HIS SECOND OSCAR.

NO MATTER WHAT KIND OF ROLE HE IS TO PLAY, JACK LEMMON
BELIEVES THAT THE KEY FOR THE ACTOR IS THE QUALITY OF THE
SCRIPT. THE BETTER THE WRITING, HE SAYS, THE MORE FLEXIBLE
THE ACTOR CAN BE IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE ROLE. AND, IF
THE WRITING IS GOOD ENOUGH, THE ACTOR CAN EXPAND THE
CHARACTERIZATION AND TAKE THE STEP THAT LEADS FROM
INTERPRETATION TO ARTISTRY.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- LEMMON

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"AN EXAMPLE BEING: I REMEMBER WAY BACK WHEN MARLON (BRANDO)
WAS ON BROADWAY DOING 'STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE.' THERE WAS
AN EATING SCENE. AND HE HAD NO LINES. AND HE SAT. AND HE
SAT. AND HE SAT. AND SEEMED TO GIVE NO REACTION TO THE
CONVERSATION GOING ON AROUND HIM. AND YET EVERYBODY KNEW
IT HAD TO BE UPSETTING HIM. AND YET HE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING.
THE VERY FACT THAT HE DIDN'T LET ANYTHING SHOW BECAME
DRAMATIC. THEN SUDDENLY AND VIOLETLY HE FLUNG ONE ARM OUT
AND EVERYTHING ON THAT TABLE FLEW. AND IT WAS A SHOCKING,
SHOCKING MOMENT. THERE'S NOTHING SO INCREDIBLY UNUSUAL
ABOUT GETTING MAD AND KNOCKING SOMETHING OFF A TABLE. BUT
THE MOMENT AT WHICH HE DID IT WAS SO UNEXPECTED
BY THE AUDIENCE, BECAUSE HE DIDN'T TELEGRAPH IT. HE DIDN'T
LET ANYTHING SHOW. THAT SELECTION WAS MUCH BETTER THAN
ACTING ALL THROUGH IT AND LETTING THE ANGER SLOWLY BUILD AND
SHOWING THE AUDIENCE HIS REACTIONS...IT WOULD HAVE TAKEN
AWAY FROM IT (THE IMPACT). THAT IS A MATTER OF SELECTION.
THAT'S HOW YOU BECOME CREATIVE.

"THERE ARE TIMES WHEN YOU CAN ENHANCE AND GO EVEN BEYOND
WHAT THE AUTHOR INTENDED...ALL TOO SELDOM. BUT I'VE BEEN
FORTUNATE ENOUGH AT TIMES TO HAVE AN AUTHOR COME UP TO ME
WITH A SMILE AND SAY, 'MAN, I NEVER THOUGHT OF THAT. I
NEVER REALIZED THAT THE CHARACTER COULD BEHAVE THAT WAY
AND THAT'S WONDERFUL.' THAT MAKES YOU FEEL TERRIFIC.
BECAUSE YOU HAVE ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTED BEYOND JUST THE
INTERPRETATION. YOU HAVE HELPED CREATE."

NARR: JACK LEMMON BELIEVES THE CREATIVE SPARK IS AN ELUSIVE
ABILITY THAT MUST BE SHARPENED THROUGH EXPERIENCE. AN ACTOR
IS LUCKY IF HE CAN WORK WITH OTHER TALENTED PEOPLE, ESPECIALLY
THE DIRECTOR.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- LEMMON

"A VERY GOOD DIRECTOR DOESN'T FRUSTRATE AN ACTOR BY NOT LETTING HIM TRY OUT HIS IDEAS. AND I HAVE NEVER BEEN UPSET WHEN I THINK I HAVE A REAL HOT-SHOT (ESPECIALLY GOOD) IDEA OF DOING IT AND HAVING THE DIRECTOR SAY, 'I DON'T THINK SO (I DON'T THINK IT'S GOOD).' I SAY, 'RIGHT.' AS LONG AS HE LETS ME TRY (THAT'S WHAT'S IMPORTANT). IT'S WHEN A DIRECTOR IS SO DIDACTIC, HE HAS THE BLINDERS ON, REALLY, AND ALTHOUGH HE SEEMS TO KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE WANTS, BASICALLY HE IS VERY INSECURE. BECAUSE HE CAN SEE NOTHING EXCEPT THE ONE WAY HE SEES IT (THE ROLE), AND ANYTHING ELSE SCARES HIM TO DEATH AND HE WON'T TRY IT. HE DOES NOT HAVE AN OPEN MIND. A GOOD DIRECTOR, AS I SAY, MUST LET YOU TRY THAT, AND MUST LET YOU CONTRIBUTE."

NARR: THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DIRECTOR AND ACTOR, SAYS MR. LEMMON, CAN'T BE OVERSTATED...NOR CAN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ACTOR'S ABILITY TO THINK, TO ANALYZE HIS PART. THAT INSIGHT CAME TO HIM DURING THE SHOOTING OF HIS FIRST FILM IN 1953. THE DIRECTOR WAS GEORGE CUKOR:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- LEMMON

"I HAD JUST COME FROM A PLAY ON BROADWAY. I WAS USED TO LARGE GESTURES, PROJECTING, PLAYING TO THE BALCONY. IT JUST SEEMED TO ME THAT EVERY TIME I DID A 'TAKE' WELL, GEORGE CUKOR WOULD SAY, 'CUT!' LESS. LESS, MY BOY. LESS, LESS. DON'T YOU SEE? SIMPLE. LESS. LESS. LESS. AND PRE SOON I FELT THAT EVEN WHEN I WAS DOING NOTHING, HE WAS STILL SAYING, 'ONE MORE TIME. BUT LESS. LESS. BRING IT DOWN. LESS.' FINALLY I, WITHOUT MEANING TO BE DISRESPECTFUL, I BLEW MY TOP (LOST MY TEMPER), SO TO SPEAK AND I TURNED AND LOUDLY SAID, 'ARE YOU TELLING ME NOT TO ACT AT ALL?' AND HE TURNED, PUT HIS HANDS TOGETHER AS IF HE WERE PRAYING AND SAID: 'YES, MY BOY. YES.' AND WHAT HE WAS SAYING WAS, DON'T LET IT SHOW. THINK. AND IN FILM YOU CAN DO THAT. BECAUSE UNLIKE THE STAGE, THAT CAMERA GETS RIGHT IN, GOES THROUGH YOUR EYEBALLS AND RIGHT DOWN TO YOUR TOENAILS ON A CLOSEUP. AND JUST THE THINKING VERY OFTEN CAN COME OVER VERY CLEARLY TO AN AUDIENCE. AND YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING NOTHING, YOU'RE NOT. NOT IF YOU'RE THINKING CLEARLY."

NARR: SOME THOUGHTS BY JACK LEMMON ON THE ACTOR'S ROLE IN THE MOTION PICTURE.

ANNCR:

THIS IS THE THIRD IN A SERIES OF SPECIAL REPORTS BASED ON
CONVERSATIONS WITH AMERICAN FILMMAKERS, ON THE OCCASION
OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF "OSCAR," THE ANNUAL AWARD
OF THE ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES.

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